DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 221 613 UD 022 303

AUTHOR Grove, Cornelius Lee
TITLE Improving Intercultural Learning through the Orientation of Sojourners. AFS Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning, No 1.
INSTITUTION AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc., New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE Jun 82
NOTE 20p.
AVAILABLE FROM AFS International/Intercultural Programs, 313 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017 (no charge).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cross Cultural Training; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; Culture Conflict; *Exchange Programs; Family Involvement; *Intercultural Programs; Training Methods
IDENTIFIERS American Field Service

ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural orientation programs are generally intended to help sojourners in countries with cultures that are different from their own to make practical preparations for living abroad; communicate with people in the host country; avoid social errors; refrain from judging the host culture against their own cultural norms; and cope with culture shock. Many of such programs have merit in that they are well planned and well implemented; however, a more important concern should be whether these programs have worth in improving sojourners' abilities to learn about other cultures on their own. In considering the worth of orientation programs, issues often emerge concerning who should be included in training; the emphasis of programs; orientation approaches to use; and the need to train returnees to the home culture. Theory and past experience suggest that program worth may be enhanced by (1) providing training not only for participants but also for their host families and natural families; (2) emphasizing post-arrival (in the host country) orientation while retaining pre-departure orientation; (3) increasing knowledge of the home culture along with training oriented toward the host culture; (4) employing both culture-general and culture-specific approaches; (5) providing reorientation programs for returnees to the home culture; and (6) utilizing both experiential and intellectual approaches in training. (Author/MJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED221613

NO. 1
Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning
JUNE 1982

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Cornelius Lee Grove
AFS International/ Intercultural Programs
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Improving Intercultural Learning Through the Orientation of Sojourners

by: Cornelius Lee Grove

A Publication of AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc.

UD 022 303

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF AFS INTERNATIONAL

AFS seeks to promote peace by stimulating an awareness of mankind's common humanity both between and within nations and by encouraging a wider understanding of the diverse cultural, social, and physical environments which make up world society. It acknowledges that peace can be threatened as much by social injustices between nations and within nations as by international tensions.

In pursuit of this goal, the core of the AFS experience has been the unique relationship in which a family accepts a maturing young person from a different cultural background and in which people accept, for the duration of their experience, a new family and educational situation. In addition, through experience and experimentation, AFS encourages new models and opportunities for exchange.

AFS, an international organization, does not concern itself with religious, political or partisan affiliations. The AFS experience is based on listening and participating on an individual basis within the community as well as within the family.

AFS encourages all former participants to involve themselves with situations in which they can apply and project their AFS experience.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN INTERCULTURAL LEARNING: AN INTRODUCTION

Dr. Urs-Rainer von Arx, Vice President for Programs, AFS International

This is the first number of the *Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning*, a publication of AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc. Through the dissemination of this and future numbers in this series, AFS International intends to provide a service to all who are interested in promoting intercultural learning experiences. AFS will make the *Occasional Papers* available to volunteers, professionals, educators, students, researchers, and others who are concerned with intercultural learning, regardless of their institutional affiliation, level of involvement, or geographical location.

Our plan for OPIL is to make it an open forum, in which the findings of researchers and the ideas of practitioners and theoreticians can be widely shared. We think of OPIL neither as a newsletter nor an academic journal. Our purpose is to use these pages to make available to a wider audience a variety of useful information that relates to intercultural learning--everything from practical step-by-step procedures to general theoretical treatises. In keeping with our determination to perform a service to *all* who are interested in intercultural learning, our contributors to this series will not be limited to people who are associated with AFS International. Also in keeping with that determination, we encourage you, our readers, to write to us with your reactions, and with your suggestions regarding topics for future issues. We will value your comments, and *we will reply*.

In this first number of OPIL, we are featuring an article by AFS's Director of Research in which the key issues in cross-cultural training are reviewed and related to the intercultural learning of students involved in people-to-people exchanges. It is no accident that we begin the OPIL series with this article, for numerous people affiliated with AFS are committed to improving the orientation programs we provide for our participants. At AFS, both research and development efforts are now underway in pursuit of this goal. (The reviews of the doctoral dissertations of Robbins S. Hopkins and Nancy B. King, previously announced as appearing in the first number of the *Papers*, will appear in the second number, to be published this fall.)

Our statement of purpose calls for AFS to be the premier international organization promoting intercultural learning experiences. We consider this publication a necessary pillar in our effort to fulfull our purpose. We hope you will help us to make it more useful to you by communicating your reactions and ideas to us. We will gladly include your friends and colleagues in our mailing list if you send us their names and addresses.

IMPROVING INTERCULTURAL LEARNING THROUGH THE ORIENTATION OF SOJOURNERS

Dr. Cornelius Lee Grove
Director of Research
AFS International

Whenever a person sojourns among people who are culturally different from himself, intercultural learning occurs. Obviously, the quantity and quality of such learning differs from sojourner to sojourner, depending on a wide variety of factors. Juan may learn that he must ask for a "lager" in the British Isles if he wants a *cold* beer. Gretchen may learn how to read, write, and converse in Portuguese, how to bake *pão de milho*, and how to use a long stick to beat olives off the trees. Eleanor may eventually master the subtle intricacies of interpersonal relationships among the people of China, and may become able to switch her cultural styles (not to mention her language) depending on whether she is in the company of Chinese or U.S. people. Each of these three sojourners has engaged in intercultural learning, and it is entirely possible that each did so without the benefit of any formal orientation program. Most of us are personally acquainted with people who have learned a great deal while living in a different culture, and who have done so in spite of having little or no formal orientation before or during their experience.

Whether intercultural learning *per se* is the foremost goal of cross-cultural orientation programs is a matter of definition. Orientation is spoken of most frequently as a way of enabling sojourners to interact more smoothly with the people of their host culture. One of the most respected authorities in the field of cross-cultural training has spoken of the purpose of orientation as "developing isomorphic attributions" (Triandis, 1975), by which he means, apparently, developing *empathy* (that is, the ability to give the same meaning to events as others do). Perhaps it is not necessary to employ such impressive terminology in describing what we are about. In my experience, cross-cultural orientations are largely intended to assist sojourners to (1) make practical preparations for travelling and living abroad, (2) communicate verbally and (in sophisticated training programs) non-verbally with the people of their host country, (3) avoid committing too many social blunders in their hosts' company, (4) refrain from using the norms and values of their home culture to evaluate their hosts' behavior, and (5) cope with the anxiety that we call "culture shock."

Intercultural learning includes numerous other objectives, some far grander than the five just enumerated. "Interdependence of peoples and nations," "peaceful conflict resolution," "personal growth and awareness," "survival on Spaceship Earth," and "universals of culture" are only some of the catch phrases associated with the intercultural learning movement. These are objectives with which virtually all of us can agree. Surely, however, the comparatively mundane and practical goals of most orientation programs--right down to how many shirts one should take to Sri

Lanka--cannot be dismissed as unworthy of the title "intercultural learning." And *all* of these objectives, from number of shirts to universals of culture, *can be attained in the absence of a formal orientation program.* The question to be addressed in this article is how orientation programs and materials can facilitate the learning of these things, or (perhaps more to the point) how such programs and materials can best enable the sojourner to be well disposed *to learn these things on his own.*

The Difference between *Merit* and *Worth**

It is important that we keep in mind what we know and don't know about cross-cultural training and orientation. We know that people who enter and remain for a long time in a culture different from their own tend to have interpersonal difficulties and misunderstandings of various kinds. We know that these problems arise in part because of differences at the *cultural* level rather than as a result of personal idiosyncracies (although these certainly play a role to some extent). These cultural differences involve assumptions, values, habits of thought, and patterns of behavior that are shared by large groups of people who live together in the same geographic region, and that are not shared by people who live elsewhere. Thanks to the painstaking work of anthropologists and other participant-observers, these assumptions, values, habits, and patterns can be described; furthermore, the *differences* between them and those existing in some other geographic region can be described. We can also describe the psychological and physiological changes that individuals tend to experience when they change their place of residence from one geographic region to another. Finally, we can also describe certain habits of thought that seem to be more or less universal, and that become counterproductive when one takes up residence among culturally different people; ethnocentrism and prejudice are two of these counterproductive habits of thought.

Cross-cultural orientation occurs when we attempt to teach this and related knowledge to people who are living, or who soon will be living, among people who are culturally different from themselves. Such teaching may have as its object not only increased *awareness* of knowledge of this type, but also the development of certain *skills* that are widely believed to be useful in coping successfully with the many differences one encounters in an unfamiliar culture. We know that people who have received this teaching often report that it has been good, enjoyable, stimulating, informative, well organized, and even helpful. Comments of this kind are evaluations of the *merit* of a training program, that is, of its value and excellence in terms of being well planned, skillfully delivered, easily understood, relevant to the concerns and problems of the participants, and so forth. By standards such as these,

---

*The concepts of "merit" and "worth," and the differences between them, are discussed in general terms by Guba & Lincoln, 1981.

there are numerous cross-cultural training programs available today that have considerable merit. The reason why they have merit is because the people who developed them worked long and hard to make them good.

The critical issue, however, is whether any of these training programs have *worth*. And here is where we depart from the realm of what we know and enter the realm of doubt. For "worth" is established by demonstrating empirically that the training has caused a significant improvement in the ability of the trainees to recognize as cultural in origin, and to cope effectively with, the difficulties and misunderstandings that they can reasonably be expected to have when living in a culture that is not their own. Expressed in more positive terms, the "worth" of training is established by demonstrating empirically that what is learned during the training is instrumental in *improving the capacity of a sojourner to engage in intercultural learning*. It is precisely this--the power of cross-cultural training to change patterns of behavior so that a sojourner can *improve* his or her ability to learn and to avoid mistakes--about which we know little. And what little we do know does not uniformly confirm that cross-cultural training has worth. Some studies have been encouraging (Brislin & Pedersen, 1976). But at least one concluded that training actually reduced the ability of trainees to adjust to their new cultural surroundings in the critical early weeks of the sojourn (Snyder, 1973). And a case has been made on theoretical grounds that the learning objectives we espouse for cross-cultural training are impossible to attain (Guthrie, 1975). Is cross-cultural training worth all the effort we've been putting into it? We must take it on faith, to some extent, that it *does* have potential for changing people and improving their ability to learn. And having affirmed our faith in training, let us now move on to the critical question of *how the worth of cross-cultural training and orientation can be increased*. This is the question to be addressed in the remainder of this article.

Six Key Issues in Cross-Cultural Orientation

Since the time that cross-cultural orientation and training became a recognizable field some twenty years ago, practitioners and theoreticians have had plenty to discuss and debate, both among themselves and with people outside the field. These discussions have dealt with issues arising from almost every aspect of training for the intercultural sojourn experience. Six of these issues are reviewed in the following paragraphs. These six have been selected for review not only because they have been major topics of discussion, but also because they provide a basis on which I will offer some specific recommendations regarding *the improvement of the intercultural learning of sojourners*. Stated as questions, the six key issues are the following:

- Train families as well as the principal participants?
- Emphasize pre-departure or post-arrival orientation programs?
- Build knowledge of the home culture or of the host culture?
- Focus on culture-specific or culture-general content?
- Train sojourners for their return to their home culture?
- Use intellectual or experiential training methods?

TRAIN FAMILIES AS WELL AS THE PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS? Transnational corporations, military services, universities, the diplomatic corps, religious groups, and even student exchange organizations have not always provided cross-cultural orientations for those who go out to represent them in other countries. The 1960s and 1970s were decades in which people in the field of cross-cultural training struggled to convince decision-makers to add cultural orientations to their technical training programs. Persuasion has not been easy. Cross-cultural training costs money and requires time, and in the absence of convincing data proving its effectiveness (or *worth*) it is readily branded as a "frill" by executives with little experience in cultures sharply different from their own. To the extent that decision-makers have been persuaded, the victory is due largely to hard economic fact: People sojourning in foreign nations have a high incidence of returning home before the end of their assignment, always at enormous cost and inconvenience to their sending organizations (Ackermann, 1976). As more and more transnational organizations became frustrated by the high rate of early returns, attention turned increasingly to an analysis of the reasons for failure. It was found that early returns were due only in part to adjustment problems of the "principal," that is, the individual actually employed by the sending organization. Far more often it was the *spouse* of the principal who cracked under the strain of culture shock and loneliness. Throughout the 1970s, cross-cultural specialists devoted more and more effort to the design of training programs for spouses and children, and in some cases for the family as a unit (Harris & Moran, 1979). But in spite of the clear evidence of the huge difficulties involved in being a spouse of someone working in an unfamiliar culture, executives and managers have been hesitant to embrace wholeheartedly this approach to orientation.

Student exchange organizations that deal with young people at the high school and college (undergraduate) levels virtually never have to contend with the adjustment problems of spouses. But a comparable training opportunity presents itself in the persons of both the natural and host families of exchange students. The natural families of such students are probably the most neglected of all people directly associated with a "principal" (in this case, the exchange student). One might be tempted to think that, since natural family members rarely appear in person at the location where the student is sojourning, they could be more or less ignored safely. Not true. In our experience at AFS International, we find that it is common for students to talk by telephone with their natural families, sometimes as often as *three times a week*. We have uncovered instances in which the advice and counsel offered by parents and other natural family members to the student has been detrimental to the adjustment and intercultural learning of the student. In effect, due to the ease of worldwide communications, natural family members potentially function as readily available cross-cultural trainers; their opinions about what the student is experiencing, although often misinformed or semi-informed, carry with them all the weight of parental authority. Of course, one can lay down guidelines regarding telephone contact between students and their natural families, but such rules are ignored by a significant number of parents and are unenforceable in any case.

A second reason why natural family members should be the recipients of cross-cultural training is that they are often unprepared for the return of the individual who spent a summer, semester, or year abroad. The returning person outwardly appears to be their son or daughter, sister or brother, but in many ways is not the person to whom they said good-bye some months previously. This is not the place to rehearse the types of changes that usually take place in a student during a homestay experience. Suffice it to say that the natural family members welcome back a person whom they unconsciously assume will pick up where he or she left off, but who actually is far more mature and independent than previously, far more knowledgeable about a wide range of topics, and far more in need of opportunities to talk about the sojourn experience than family members are willing to provide. Besides being a contributing factor to "reverse culture shock," the severe lack of preparation of natural family members may be counterproductive in terms of assisting or enabling the returnee to structure and consolidate the jumble of intercultural learning experiences with which he or she is coping during the first month or two back home.

There is little disagreement that *host* family members should receive an orientation, although probably less than a majority of hosts actually participate in training sessions that could be termed "thorough" or "extensive." Many hosts merely are sent or given a handbook of some kind, which they may--or may not--read at their leisure. Host family orientation materials tend to concentrate on a wide range of practical and emergency procedures, on promoting a smooth mutual adjustment of the family and the student, and on the intercultural learning that should be possible for the *family* because of hosting a foreign individual in the home. Information regarding the intercultural learning of the *student* and ways in which the hosts might promote and intensify such learning, while not wholly absent, is not emphasized in host family orientation materials. As a practical matter, host parents are better situated than anyone else to assist the student in attaining at least some of the common objectives of intercultural learning. Preparing training approaches and materials designed to better enable hosts to fulfill this role is a challenging task, but one that could yield learning benefits for the students who are hosted.

EMPHASIZE PRE-DEPARTURE OR POST-ARRIVAL ORIENTATION PROGRAMS? The debate about the relative merits of pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programs is not simply an argument about how best to allocate time, money, and other limited resources. It is also an important theoretical issue turning on questions such as *who* should conduct training, *where* the sessions are best held, and *when* trainees are best able to understand and absorb the training content. Many transnational organizations concentrate their efforts on pre-departure training, that is, on disseminating materials and providing formal orientation sessions before the participants leave their home country. The case of AFS International may be typical. In 1981, we polled 31 of the 55 AFS national offices around the world in an effort to determine, among other things, how much effort was being devoted, proportionately, to pre-departure, during-the-sojourn, and post-return orientation programs. The figures we came up

with are rough but not inaccurate estimates: Pre-departure 47%, During-the-sojourn 36%, Post-return 17%. In short, AFS concentrates almost *half* of its orientation effort in the period of time between the selection of the students and their departure.

Pre-departure orientations may be preferred by those responsible for selecting sojourners and sending them abroad, but there is reason to believe that extensive, sophisticated pre-departure training is wasted to a considerable extent, especially when it deals with the host country. For during the time when the trainees are still in their home environment, most of them lack the background and first-hand experience that is necessary for them to fully understand what their trainers are talking about. It is not that the trainees cannot understand the words and sentences that they hear or read while they are undergoing an orientation prior to departure. Rather, the problem is that the images they form in their minds as a consequence of receiving (hearing or reading) these words and sentences are not, and *cannot be*, congruent with the reality of an intercultural experience in a host country where they have never sojourned. This point of view is based on a theory of human communication advanced by anthropologist Edward T. Hall (Hall, 1976). This theory views as naive the commonsense notion that we use language to send "messages" to each other. Hall points out that words are merely sounds unless and until they enable the person who receives them to form mental images. *These images of necessity must be drawn from a stock of images previously formulated on the basis of experiences that the person has had throughout life*. The person who has had limited experience--in our terms, limited with respect to contact with culturally different people and places--has limited ability to call up mental images that are congruent with the reality of living in another culture. This deficiency does not prevent the person from calling up *some sort of images* (after all, the words employed in any orientation program usually are understood in a culture-bound way), but--worse, perhaps--insures that the images that are called up are inaccurate *without being perceived as inaccurate*. To the extent that this is true in the case of any given trainee, the "worth" of pre-departure orientation is limited.

Accepting that this is a serious difficulty does not lead to the conclusion that pre-departure orientation programs ought to be scrapped. It *does* suggest that pre-departure orientations should (1) be relatively short, (2) concentrate on practical matters such as obtaining visas and selecting proper clothing, and (3) attempt to establish some basic expectations that are realistic in terms of the situations the trainees will encounter during their first week in the host country. Other approaches that are appropriate for pre-departure orientations include culture-*general* training and building awareness of the trainees' *home* culture (more about these below). For at least three reasons, full-scale, culture-specific orientation to the host culture should occur after the sojourners have arrived in the host country. (1) Host nationals can participate as trainers or facilitators far more easily. (2) The language and culture of the host country exists all around the trainees, giving them greater motivation to learn as well as a far better basis for understanding the material in terms of the mental images they are able to form. (3) Trainees can test their new awareness

and skills *immediately* in a *genuine* culture-contact situation rather than in the contrived, artificial atmosphere that tends to characterize many experiential exercises during pre-departure orientations.

BUILD KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOME CULTURE OR OF THE HOST CULTURE? The word "orientation" tends to suggest learning about the host culture, at least when approached uncritically. It is not a matter of universal agreement, however, that this is what orientation should be. As long as thirty years ago, a leading figure in the field of international education was saying that people intending to sojourn abroad should prepare by studying their native culture rather than that of the place to be visited (Taba, 1953). And one of the best known training designs developed in the 1960s, the "contrast-American technique," was based on the assumption that knowledge of one's home culture was an effective aid to adjustment in another culture (Kraemer, 1973). The debate between the pro-home and pro-host advocates probably never will be settled, in part because the course of action that many would agree is best--building knowledge of both home and host cultures--is too expensive for many transnational organizations. Those who favor training that focuses on the host culture have tended to maintain the upper hand, largely because their point of view has seemed intuitively correct. Two of the arguments put forward by those who advocate focusing on the home culture are worth noting, however. First, there is no effective way of preparing a trainee for immersion in an unfamiliar culture until he is actually immersed in it, because no type of training--not even experiential training--can approximate an unfamiliar culture in all its subtlety, richness, and complexity. Training that attempts to simulate an unfamiliar culture is likely to oversimplify matters to a considerable degree, and to provide trainees with a false sense of confidence. (This argument recalls the point made earlier about the impossibility of calling up mental images of something that a person has never experienced.) Second, building awareness of one's home culture holds the potential advantage of helping to change the ethnocentric attitudes of trainees; that is, it may help them to understand that their supposedly "natural" values and behaviors are actually *choices* from among a vast range of potential alternatives available to humans, and that there is no reason why people living in societies elsewhere should not have made a different set of choices. Reducing ethnocentrism is one of the key objectives of intercultural learning, and attaining an anthropologist's perspective on one's native culture may be an especially effective means of chipping away at the habit of assuming that familiar values and behaviors are the norm against which all humans are to be measured.

FOCUS ON CULTURE-SPECIFIC OR CULTURE-GENERAL CONTENT? Another content-related issue that has been debated over the past decade is whether cross-cultural training should focus on values and behaviors identified with a *specific* culture, or whether it should aim at increasing *general* knowledge and ability in ways such as those commonly included under the headings "intercultural awareness" and "intercultural skills." Two points need to be made about this issue. First, we should take note

of a problem of categorization. Is a program designed to build awareness of one's *home* culture properly classified as "culture-specific" or "culture-general"? At first glance, the answer seems obvious: culture-specific. Often, however, the basic purpose of training that focuses on the home culture is to increase the trainees' understanding of the nature of culture, of how culture invades and determines one's life at every level, of the possibility that different solutions to common human problems are equally workable, and so forth. In short, culture-specific training about the home culture sometimes embraces learning objectives that we usually associate with the culture-*general* approach. Second, it is not always possible to arrive at a conclusion about the culture-specific vs. culture-general issue on purely theoretical grounds. Practical considerations are important. Who is to develop the orientation materials? Who is to deliver the training sessions? Culture-specific training should be prepared and presented *only* by individuals who possess a great deal of knowledge about the culture in question, and, ideally, who have had a great deal of experience living or sojourning in that culture. If this type of expertise is not available, culture-general training is to be preferred, theoretical considerations to the contrary notwithstanding.

On the theoretical side, the positions of the protagonists can be summarized as follows. Those favoring the culture-specific approach base their case to a large extent on the need for efficiency and effectiveness on the part of the sojourner. Sure (they say), given enough time and allowing for an unlimited number of blunders, many people can adjust to even the most radically different culture--but why rely completely on a lengthy and personally exhausting trial-and-error approach to adjustment when much of the unfathomable can be described and practiced beforehand? And they criticize the generalists as providers of wishy-washy theories with little practical value when one is trying to deal with the realities of daily life in a new culture. The generalists, on the other hand, argue that teaching the specifics of another culture is an enormously complex task that is almost impossible to do thoroughly and well. Furthermore, they object that culture-specific training tends to paralyze the trainee when he finally confronts the new culture because he is tempted to rely on his (inevitably incomplete) training instead of employing a broad spectrum of skills to become observant, open, flexible, and consequently self-reliant in the face of cultural differences. Whatever the relative merits of these opinions, many cross-cultural trainers would agree that there is value in both approaches. Many orientation programs include elements of each.

TRAIN SOJOURNERS FOR THEIR RETURN TO THEIR HOME CULTURE? Perhaps the clearest trend to emerge during the 1970s was the steady growth in awareness of "reverse culture shock," the series of difficulties often faced by people returning to their home country following an extended sojourn abroad. The commonsense view of an expatriate's homecoming had been that readjustment was more or less automatic. (This was, after all, his *native* culture!) But this view was wrong. The reason why it was wrong was that it failed to take into account the degree to which an

individual is capable of adjusting to a different culture, is capable of becoming, culturally speaking, a different person. To the extent that someone has assumed a new set of cultural characteristics, then, it is misleading to speak of him or her as "returning home." *Where is home?* The old, naive view of an expatriate's return was content with answering that question on purely historical grounds. On cultural grounds, however, answering that question is a complex task, and the answer for any individual returnee is, to some extent, unique. What came to be realized during the 1970s was that, for some sojourners, readjustment to the home culture proved to be even more difficult than the initial adjustment to the host culture. Eventually, a rough rule of thumb was formulated: People whose adjustment to the host culture had been comparatively successful were likely to be the ones who would suffer the most upon returning home (Adler, 1976). Because researchers had been able to describe certain common characteristics of the reverse culture shock syndrome (Marsh, 1975), orientation procedures were simple to develop. In the main, they consist of (1) building realistic expectations about the days and weeks immediately following one's return (this goal to be achieved *before* the sojourner departs from the host culture), and (2) bringing sojourners together so that sharing and mutual support could occur naturally and informally (this goal to be realized *after* the sojourner returns to his "home" culture).

USE INTELLECTUAL OR EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING METHODS? During the 1970s, numerous innovative cross-cultural training techniques were published, most of which were of the experiential variety. The issue of whether intellectual or experiential procedures were best was not widely discussed. (For an exception, see Pedersen & Howell, 1977). The Great Debate on this issue had taken place in the 1960s, when the supporters of experiential training methods severely criticized the practitioners of the so-called "university model," an intellectual approach to training that had dominated the field through the mid-1960s. The turning point is generally accepted to have taken place in 1967 with the publication of an article by Roger Harrison and Richard Hopkins (Harrison & Hopkins, 1967). To understand the appearance of this article at that particular time, one must know that research during the early 1960s as well as the anecdotal testimony of numerous returned Peace Corps volunteers had established that the adjustment record of expatriate Americans was poor. Harrison and Hopkins argued that the adjustment difficulties of Americans could be traced to the use of traditional teaching approaches in cross-cultural training programs, which up until that time had taken place most often on university campuses. This intellectualized approach, they maintained, was not only inadequate but actually counterproductive; it probably was *responsible for* much of the culture shock experienced by Americans on assignment in foreign nations. Harrison and Hopkins stated that because traditional learning methods (such as lectures and readings) encourage the learner to depend on experts and authorities for direction and information, and because these sources of support were bound to be absent in the foreign environment, most learners would be crippled by the numerous complex and strange situations they would encounter in the host country. Harrison and Hopkins were aware that the intellectual approach avoided

emotional engagement so that better understanding could be achieved, but they argued that emotional distance was neither possible nor desirable once a person arrived on assignment in a new culture. They stressed that trainees needed to develop what they termed "emotional muscle" and an ability to work without outside supports in making choices and dealing with uncertainties. They recommended a training design that focused on skills such as solving problems in situations where the nature of the problem was not clear, using data immediately present in the environment, making choices in the face of competing sets of values, and being willing to act in the absence of painstaking analysis or the direction of outside authority.

Given its stress on the practical importance of self-reliance, inductive reasoning, problem-solving, freedom from authority, getting things done, and learning from first-hand experience, the Harrison and Hopkins article is a classic example of the application of U.S. traits and values to the attainment of an objective--the objective in this case being the improvement of orientation programs for people going abroad. In their defense, two points must be remembered. First, they were addressing themselves to a U.S. audience. Second, the old training approach had indeed been found wanting. On the other hand, the point of view they enunciated has had a lasting impact on cross-cultural orientation practices around the world due to the fact that U.S. people have dominated the field since its inception. This is unfortunate. For the experiential approach urged by Harrison and Hopkins (and by scores of others who have followed them) rarely has been examined to decide how appropriate it is for the many cultures where styles of learning and teaching differ from those preferred in the U.S.A. *The experiential methodology is based on a set of assumptions that are known by anthropologists of education to be inappropriate in many cultures*, and that are not universally accepted by the U.S. public for which they originally were developed. Some of the assumptions that, singly or in various combinations, undergird many experiential training exercises are these:

(1) that trainees are willing and able to assess their own needs, and that they share responsibility with the trainer for meeting those needs;

(2) that self-directed "learning by doing," often involving trial-and-error methods, is the most effective way of acquiring knowledge and skill;

(3) that role playing in contrived situations can so realistically reproduce the circumstances of everyday life that the skills gained in the former are easily transferred to the latter; and

(4) that disclosure of one's private thoughts and feelings in a public forum is helpful in terms of learning and personal growth.

While it is probably true that the initial fascination with highly experiential methods has worn thin for many practitioners (Hoopes, 1979), a recently published and authoritative manual in the field of cross-cultural training advocates a wholly experiential approach (Casse, 1979). The importance of matching the method to the trainee still is not widely appreciated, or so it would appear.

Summary and Recommendations

Intercultural learning occurs to *some* extent whenever a person sojourns among culturally different people. The intercultural learning of that sojourner has "worth" to the degree that it brings about certain empirically verifiable changes in her or his behavior, changes that are beneficial to the individual (as sojourner or as returnee) and/or to mankind generally. Cross-cultural orientation programs have "worth" to the extent that they improve the capacity or the disposition of a sojourner to engage in intercultural learning. The thoughtful preparation and skillful delivery of such programs have given many of them a great deal of "merit." But the "worth" of orientations has not been conclusively demonstrated. The focus of our concern should be *how the worth of cross-cultural orientation programs can be increased.*

From among the various topics of interest in the field of cross-cultural training and orientation over the past two decades, six were reviewed in the body of this paper. I selected these six issues for review in part because they provide me with a basis for making recommendations concerning how the worth of orientations can be increased, or, put differently, how we can improve intercultural learning through the orientation of sojourners.

The first issue that was reviewed is a question about the value of training families. Although this issue initially arose with respect to the spouses and children of personnel assigned to posts in foreign countries, its counterpart in the field of international student exchange is the training of natural families and (in the case of homestay programs) host families. Natural families usually are briefed regarding the mechanical and financial aspects of the exchange experience, but there is little commitment to providing them with cross-cultural training. There is general agreement that host families should receive such training, but few actually participate in extended formal training sessions. Even if we limit our objective to improving the intercultural learning of the *sojourner only*, we need to appreciate that neglect of host and natural families is shortsighted. For these families are in frequent contact with the sojourner and are well situated to act, as it were, as his or her cross-cultural trainers or counselors. Since host and natural families will act in these capacities *whether or not we prepare them*, it becomes incumbent on us to see to it that they are well trained. I think that we might go so far as to view orientation for host and natural families as a species of *training for trainers*.

The second issue reviewed in this paper involves the relative emphasis placed on pre-departure and post-arrival (or, more broadly, during-the-sojourn) orientations. I believe that this issue has not received the attention it deserves. By raising it here I hope to stimulate awareness of its importance in terms of improving the intercultural learning of sojourners. For I believe that much of the effort lavished on lengthy, full-scale pre-departure orientation programs is wasted. I am not making a judgement about the "merit" of these programs, but rather questioning the degree to which they can have "worth." My main arguments regarding this matter already have been presented; they are based on the inability

of trainees with little or no intercultural experience to fully comprehend sophisticated presentations concerning either the details of life in the host culture or the nature of the cross-cultural adjustment process. What I am advocating is *not* the abandonment of pre-departure orientations, but a switch in emphasis so that the preponderance of effort comes *after* the participants have arrived in the host country. The advantages of doing this, already enumerated, are grounded in a single fact: Once in the host country, trainees frequently if not continually experience the kinds of situations and problems to which cross-cultural training addresses itself. Specifically, I believe that the orientation sessions that *most* effectively promote intercultural learning are those that occur *two to four weeks after the participants have arrived.* Why? Because it takes a couple of weeks for the euphoria to wear off, for relationships to be established with the host population, for mistakes and misunderstandings to occur, and for the sojourners to realize how much they *don't* know about the host culture and about the nature of the intercultural experience, *and how important it is for them to learn what cross-cultural training has to offer.* Of course, it may be impractical or prohibitively expensive to bring a group of sojourners back together after they have dispersed to the far corners of a large nation. But, if at all possible, a major orientation program should be made available to them two to four weeks after they begin living in the new culture.

The third issue concerns the comparative advantage of building knowledge of one's home or host culture. I hope that my recommendation in the preceding paragraph underscores my views regarding the critical importance of training regarding the host culture. What I want to point out is that there *also* is value in building a sojourner's knowledge of his or her *home* culture. (This should be accomplished during pre-departure orientation sessions.) If we are committed to improving the capacity and disposition of the sojourner for intercultural learning, then we cannot afford to ignore this type of training. I have already noted that gaining an anthropologist's perspective on one's home culture may be an especially effective means of reducing ethnocentrism, which, in turn, should improve one's disposition to remain open-minded to all that the host culture has to offer. Let me add here that a sojourner's *capacity* to engage in intercultural learning also may be improved by gaining such a perspective because it increases his awareness of the many *types* of variations that may exist between two cultures. To the extent that one is awake to the types of differences that may occur, he has *learned how to learn.*

Issue number four asked whether it is best to focus on culture-specific or culture-general content in orientation programs. I agree with the conclusion that there is value in both approaches. Certainly, in what I have said throughout this paper, there is evidence of the importance I attribute to the culture-specific approach. In my view, however, culture-general training may be underutilized. For the objectives of this approach are to improve in a general way the *awareness* of the sojourner regarding a wide range of cultural phenomena, and to increase his or her *skills* for dealing with cultural differences and culture shock. In terms of increasing intercultural learning, these objectives

hold promise of being especially productive because, again, they help the sojourner to *learn how to learn*.

Issue number five focused on the question of whether it is important to provide orientation programs for returnees. There has been growing agreement that "re-orientation" is valuable--indeed, may be necessary --and that a successful program involves sessions before the sojourners depart from their host country as well as after they return home. Those of us committed to the improvement of intercultural learning should not dismiss these procedures as useful only in facilitating readjustment. The mutual sharing of knowledge, experiences, feelings, and especially impressions of the "home" environment from the perspective of an outsider can be an invaluable factor in enabling the recent returnee to assemble, order, and consolidate the vast and disparate bits of learning acquired throughout his or her intercultural experience.

The last key issue dealt with the debate between the proponents of experiential training methods on the one hand, and the defenders of the intellectual approach on the other. Although I view myself as promoting cross-cultural training that maintains a flexible balance between these two extremes, the fact that experiential training continues to enjoy great popularity to some extent casts me in the role of a defender of the old "university model." I am not comfortable in that role because, at base, I have only two complaints regarding experiential methods. First, they are in danger of being culturally inappropriate, depending upon the customary learning style of the people whom one is training; this is the objection I raised in detail in the body of this paper. Second, even allowing for trainees who appreciate these procedures--and I have no doubt that many are to be found, especially in the U.S.A.--experiential exercises rarely are able to deliver all that their proponents have promised. This is less the fault of the method than of its advocates, who sometimes leave the impression that an unfamiliar culture can be created in all its subtlety and detail right there at the training site, enabling participants to experience authentic cultural differences in a laboratory situation. (In my view, the most exaggerated claims tend to be made for simulation games, many of which are commercially marketed.) I'm confident that a painstaking microanalysis of almost any experiential training activity not occurring in the host culture would demonstrate that the familiar cultural elements (that is, those deriving from the home culture) in play at any moment outweigh the unfamiliar, contrived ones. What I would like to see more of is moderation on the part of those who love experiential exercises. *I do not wish to promote a wholesale return to the university model.* For I am convinced that both experiential and intellectual methods have their place in cross-cultural orientations. I also believe that some of the most promising training activities are the ones that blend these two approaches to a greater or lesser degree: case studies, self- and cultural-awareness exercises, films and dramatizations followed by discussions, role plays, community investigations, and the like. A fundamental objective of activities such as these is helping the participant to *learn how to learn*. And to the extent that this objective is attained for any trainee, improved intercultural learning would seem to be the inevitable outcome.

In concluding, I would like to report that AFS International is committed to a long-term effort to improve the intercultural learning of exchange students and other program participants by upgrading the orientation procedures we employ before, during, and after their experience in a different culture. Some of the steps that we have taken and are taking in pursuit of this goal are the development of manuals for orientation leaders and facilitators (such as the *Host Family Orientation Handbook*), the sharing of successful methods and materials all around the world (through the annual editions of the *AFS Orientation Handbook*), and the preparation and pilot-testing of model comprehensive orientation packages (as in our "Integrated Orientation Project"). Research is playing a role, too. Two current projects are of special relevance. In one, we are studying in great depth the nature of the host family experience and the patterns of interaction among members of the family and the hosted student; the findings of this project should enable us to produce a superior host family orientation manual. In the other, we are examining in great detail what occurs during the orientation sessions offered to students by a hosting country, and what effect these sessions have in terms of the adjustment and intercultural learning of the students; the findings of this project should provide us with a better understanding of the "worth" of orientations and help us design improved methods and materials for the critical during-the-sojourn phase of the orientation process.

Our progress in these various tasks will be reported in future numbers of the *Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning* as well as in other forums as appropriate. Meanwhile, I hope that the thoughts and recommendations in this paper will stimulate discussion and renewed commitment to the development of *worth*while orientation programs among my colleagues.

REFERENCES

Ackermann, Jean Marie. "Skill Training for Foreign Assignment: The Reluctant U.S. Case." In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (2nd Edition). Wadsworth Publishing Co. (Belmont, California), 1976. pp. 298-306.

Adler, Nancy. *Growthful Re-Entry Theory*. Graduate School of Management, UCLA (Los Angeles, California), 1976. Mimeographed.

Brislin, Richard, & Pedersen, Paul. *Cross-Cultural Orientation Programs*. Gardner Press (New York, New York), 1976.

Casse, Pierre. *Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind*. Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (Washington, D.C.), 1979.

Guba, Egon G., & Lincoln, Yvonna S. *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches*. Jossey-Bass (San Francisco, California), 1981.

Guthrie, George. "A Behavioral Analysis of Culture Learning." In R. Brislin et al. (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning*. John Wiley & Sons (New York, New York), 1975. pp. 95-115.

Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture*. Anchor Press/Doubleday (Garden City, New York), 1976.

Harris, Philip, & Moran, Robert. *Managing Cultural Differences*. Gulf Publishing Co. (Houston, Texas), 1979.

Harrison, Roger, & Hopkins, Richard. "The Design of Cross-Cultural Training: An Alternative to the University Model." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1967. pp. 431-460.

Hoopes, David. "Notes on the Evolution of Cross-Cultural Training." In D. Hoopes & P. Ventura (Eds.), *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methodologies*. Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (Washington, D.C.), 1979.

Kraemer, Alfred J. *Development of a Cultural Self-Awareness Approach to Instruction in Intercultural Communication*. HumRRO (Alexandria, Virginia), 1973. Available only from the National Technical Information Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Marsh, Harriet L. *Re-Entry/Transition Seminars: Report on the Wingspread Colloquium*. National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (Washington, D.C.), 1975.

Pedersen, Paul, & Howell, William. "Pros and Cons of Using Structured Exercises in Intercultural Groups." In W. Weeks et al. (Eds.), *A Manual of Structured Experiences for Cross-Cultural Learning*. Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), 1977. pp. i-xii.

Snyder, Harry M. "Cross-Cultural Training--Why?" *Peace Corps Program and Training Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1973. pp. 7-8.

Taba, Hilda. *Cultural Attitudes and International Understanding*. Institute of International Education (New York, New York), 1953.

Triandis, Harry. "Culture Training, Cognitive Complexity, and Interpersonal Attitudes." In R. Brislin et al. (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learning*. John Wiley & Sons (New York, New York), 1975. pp. 39-77.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

is a publication of

AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc.
313 East 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017, USA

Editor: Dr. Neal Grove

Associate Editor: Bettina Hansel

Vice President for Programs:
Dr. Urs-Rainer von Arx

AFS International publishes the **Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning** as a public service, and for this reason the articles contained in the **Papers** are not copyrighted unless a specific notice to the contrary is provided. Articles printed herein without copyright notice may be quoted or reprinted freely and without permission; however, proper attribution should be given and the Editor of the **Papers** should be informed.

Until further notice, each number of the **Papers** is disseminated without charge. Anyone may have his name added to the mailing list by writing to the Editor.

Potential contributors should communicate with the Editor prior to submitting articles to be considered for publication.